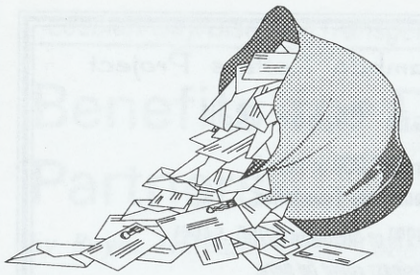

Lambda Letters Project

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Vol. 9, No. 9 September, 2001 www.lambdaletters.org LambdaLP@aol.com (916) 728-1261

(Re-)Introduction to Lambda Letters Project

by Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Lambda Letters nearly tripled its membership during this summer. As a result, some of you may not know our history or just how widespread our membership and activities are. Some of you longtime members may have forgotten our story, too. In either case, it seems timely to tell you more about us.

Lambda Letters was founded in 1988 as a response to a disappointing March on Washington in 1987. My partner Larry and I attended the march and thought Congress would surely be impressed by the huge throng of our brothers and sisters who attended that event. However, a few days later, the U.S. Senate approved Jesse Helms' legislation that put content restrictions on federally funded AIDS informational materials. Those restrictions made the materials essentially useless in appealing to the gay community.

Larry and I came home determined to create an organization that would help people express their views directly to the elected officials who represent them. We thought letters from the voters would be a potent way of persuading legislators to do the right thing. The

Continued on page 19

Making Even More of a Difference

The Lambda Letters Project is making a real difference for the community. As noted in the article to the left, the Project's membership has nearly tripled this summer. Yet this fast-growing organization is governed by a board of directors with only seven members. These are dedicated, friendly people who get the job done and have fun together doing it. More such people are needed and we invite you to join this team by becoming a member of the board yourself.

The board's work is interesting and important. It reviews and approves Lambda Letters' budget. It reviews income and spending reports provided by the treasurer to monitor the finances of the organization. It reviews activities of the staff and makes policy decisions about the work that's done. Board members attend pride festivals to help us enlist more Project members. They also make presentations to groups about the activities of the organization. Board members do fundraising, too. Many board members help with other specific tasks, such as running our Web site, helping prepare our mailings, adding people to our computerized mailing lists, lobbying, etc.

Continued on page 18

Also in This Issue...

LGBT Issue 3, 18
HIV/AIDS Issue 3
People of Color Issue 4, 17
Women's Issue 4, 18
September Legislative Update 5–16
Census Confirms Domestic Partnerships 16
Improve the World! 17

Lambda Letters Progress Report

Messages Collected

July, 2001	7,877 letters & e-mails
In all of 2001	84,641 letters & e-mails

Dollars Spent

July, 2001	$3,359
In all of 2001	$28,006

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

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Lambda Letters Project

Mission Statement

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in American society.

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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly, except in December, by Lambda Letters Project Inc., 6529 Cowboy Way, Citrus Heights, CA 95621.
Postmaster: send address changes to Lambda Letters Project, 4577 Park Blvd. #4, San Diego, CA 92116.

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Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Issue

Benefits for Domestic Partners

by Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

As mentioned in another article in this newsletter ("Census Confirms Existence of Domestic Partnerships"), the US Census Bureau reports that they found over 92,000 same-sex domestic partnerships in California when they conducted last year's census. That, almost certainly, is an underestimate. Yet legal rights for domestic partners are currently almost nonexistent.

California law allows domestic partners to register their relationships with the Secretary of State's office. Whoopee! The law also guarantees hospital visitation rights to domestic partners. Most people could do this even before the law was passed. Finally, current law allows certain state and local governments to offer health care insurance to the partners of their employees and retirees. However, only governments that are part of the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) have this permission. Some local governments are not part of PERS. Even state and local governments in the PERS system do not have to offer the coverage. If they are willing to do it, and their employees and retirees are represented by a union, the union has to agree as well. Union support is certainly not guaranteed.

As regards retirees, current law allows governments in PERS to offer health benefits to the domestic partners of their retirees. However, if the retiree dies first, the law says health benefits for the domestic partner *must* be cut off. Is it any wonder that barely more than 7,000 domestic partners have bothered to register with the Secretary of State?

AB 25, introduced by Carole Migden (D–San Francisco), aims to remedy the situation by giving several new rights to domestic partners. For example, it would allow opposite-gender, senior citizen couples to register as domestic partners if one of them is over 62. Currently both must be over 62.

AB 25 would allow people to make medical decisions for their partners under certain circumstances. Currently the parents or siblings of the patient could cut the domestic partner out of this decision-making process. The bill would require many insurers to offer domestic partner insurance coverage in their group

Continued on page 18

HIV/AIDS Issue

A Living Wage for HIV/AIDS Doctors

by Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Currently, doctors receive a flat monthly payment for each HMO patient they serve. The rate is the same whether the person never comes to the doctor or the person has frequent and expensive treatment needs. The general idea is that there are enough people who need few services, and are inexpensive for the doctor to serve, to cover the doctor's costs of caring for the patients (such as those with HIV/AIDS) who do need expensive care.

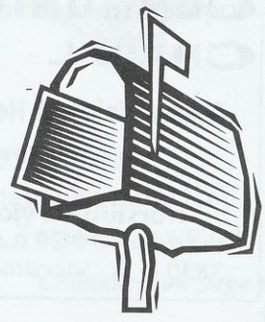
Unfortunately, this system penalizes doctors who care for HIV/AIDS patients in two ways.

First, HIV is concentrated in certain areas, so doctors in those areas naturally see more HIV/AIDS patients who need expensive care. Several doctors and doctor networks have actually gone out of business because of this.

Second, because there is such a financial disincentive to do good work, few providers want a reputation for excellence of HIV/AIDS care. The result is that care is not often what it should be. AB 937, by Assemblymembers Paul Koretz (D–West Hollywood) and Gil Cedillo (D–Los Angeles), will correct this problem by ensuring that doctors get paid a rate that covers the cost of care for HIV/AIDS patients.

AB 937 requires HMOs to negotiate rates that ensure efficiency, cost effectiveness, quality of care, and access to care. It requires that payments to doctors who treat people with HIV/AIDS adequately reimburse the doctor for his or her costs. It also requires the state to conduct a study on the feasibility of a similar payment scheme for other chronic diseases.

AIDS is not going away. Numerous reports indicate that the rate of new infections is on the rise. That means we will continue to need doctors willing to treat people with the disease. If they can't turn a profit doing so, they will not provide the service. AB 937will make it profitable for doctors to care for people with HIV/AIDS. Please urge Governor Davis to sign this bill. ###



People of Color Issue

Real Education for Immigrants

by Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

Karla wants to be a dentist as well as an advocate in the Latino community against domestic violence. Besides taking her regular high school classes, Karla is on her school's varsity soccer and tennis teams, the school yearbook staff, and Latinos Unidos, a Latino student group. She is currently Vice President of the Associated Student Body at her high school in San Francisco.

Karla has a 3.7 grade point average. That average plus all her extracurricular activities make her an excellent candidate for admission to UC Berkeley. However, she is an undocumented immigrant. That means under current law she would have to pay out-of-state tuition rates to go to Berkeley. She would have to pay as much as $6,000 more per year to attend Berkeley than any of her classmates who were born in this country or who have their papers. Her application for papers with the Immigration and Naturalization Service is currently pending. However, until and unless she gets those papers, she may not be able to afford to attend the University of California.

We think promising students like Karla should get the same in-state tuition rates for California's public colleges and universities as their classmates do. Assemblymember Marco Firebaugh (D–East Los Angeles) has introduced AB 540, which would do just that. The bill is cosponsored by, among others, Abel Maldonado (R–San Luis Obispo).

Would California stand alone if it passed AB 540? No. Texas just passed a similar law for immigrants in its state. Signed by the Texas governor, it would allow

Continued on page 17

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Women's Issue

Bravery Behind Prison Walls

by Adrienne Lauby

On August 4th, when Charisse Shumate died in a prison hospital, her paperwork for compassionate release had been sitting on Governor Davis' desk for two months.

Charisse Shumate spent 16 years in jail for her response to the abuse she suffered as a battered woman. In jail, she became a prison advocate for battered women and an activist for better prison health care.

She was loved and respected by activists in many women's groups for inmate rights. Her work led her to risk taking a leadership role as the lead plaintiff and prisoner spokesperson in a class-action lawsuit challenging the medical neglect and abuse of women prisoners.

Charisse became ill from the complications of sickle-cell anemia, cancer, and hepatitis C. No one who knew her wanted Charisse to die alone, shackled to a hospital bed. Her mother, son, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, and friends wanted to be with her during her final days, to hold and comfort her.

For 60 days, the governor ignored a dying woman who had fought to improve his prison system. That problem conveniently went away for him when she finally died.

But Charisse's friends and colleagues did not go away—and they are calling on the governor to sign two new prison bills.

SB 396, sponsored by Sheila Kuehl (D–Los Angeles), eliminates the requirement that people in prison pay $5 each time they want to visit a physician. It also requires the California Department of Corrections' medical facilities to become accredited by a national accrediting agency for medical prison programs.

AB 675, sponsored by Carol Migden (D–San Francisco), helps terminally-ill prison inmates (those considered no threat to the community) to die at home. It does not require release; it only sets a clear procedure for the request and requires that the family be informed.

Continued on page 18

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September Legislative Update

God rested on the seventh day. But our state legislators rested during the first 19 days of August. And while God was finished when he rested, our legislators still had over 1,500 bills to consider. In fact, on their first day back, August 20, the Senate Appropriations Committee had to consider no fewer than 300 bills!

The legislature is required to finish its work no later than September 14. Any bills not passed by that date are dead, at least for this year. Governor Davis will have until mid-October to decide what action to take on the bills sent to him. He can sign them, veto them, or let them become law without his signature.

In the following list you may see that a bill is on an appropriations committee's suspense list. This means that it is an expensive bill (costing the government more than $150,000) and the committee has put off a decision on the bill until later. However, all bills must have been out of the Appropriations Committee no later than September 30th unless the legislature grants an exemption from that rule.

You may also see a statement that the bill is a two-year bill. That means the bill has been dropped for this year but may be taken up by the bill's author again next year. If so, it would start where it left off. It would not have to start the whole legislative process all over again.

The following list shows the status of the bills we have been following as of late August.

HIV/AIDS Issues

AB 142 (Stuart Richman, R–Granada Hills)
Purpose: To prohibit healthcare plans from forcing physicians to pay the cost of certain healthcare services.
Status: Approved by the Senate Insurance Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 276 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To extend to two years a limitation to issue accusations of violations of the right to be free from violence, intimidation, or threats of intimidation, including for persons claimed to be aggrieved by HIV discrimination.
Status: Approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee for a hearing on August 20.
LLP Position: Support, requesting addition of gender to the list of prohibited bases of intimidation.

AB 916 (Fred Keeley, D–Santa Cruz)
Purpose: To expand the existing requirement for school-based AIDS prevention instruction to include instruction on sexually transmitted infection; and require related instructional materials to be medically accurate and free of ethnic, gender, and racial biases.
Status: Approved by the Senate Education Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 937 (Paul Koretz, D–West Hollywood)
Purpose: To require every healthcare service plan that covers hospital, medical, or surgical expenses to develop a plan establishing risk-adjusted capitated rates for the reimbursement of providers for the treatment of enrollees infected with HIV. Would require the Department of Health Services to develop risk-adjusted capitated rates for treatment of Medi-Cal recipients infected with HIV, in accordance with specified requirements. Paying doctors "risk adjusted capitated rates" means paying rates high enough to cover the actual costs to the doctor of treating the patient with HIV.
Status: Approved by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1263 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To allow the state to establish a rapid HIV testing process at designated sites. Test results would

Continued on page 6

See Copies of State Bills

View any state bill listed here by going to the Lambda Letters Project Web site! Go to www.lambdaletters.org and click on the Legislative Update button. Click on the bill number you're interested in and choose "HTML" to view it.

Legislative Update

Continued from page 5

be made available to the person in the same appointment at which the test was done.
Status: Approved by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Sent by the chair of that committee to the Senate floor.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1292 (Dion Aroner, D–Berkeley)
Purpose: To allow people to purchase and possess intravenous needles and syringes without a prescription. Requires that pharmacies provide purchasers with information regarding safe disposal of syringes.
Status: Referred to Assembly Health Committee. Made a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 187 (John Vasconcellos, D–Santa Clara)
Purpose: To require the State Department of Health to establish and maintain a voluntary program for the issuance of registry identification cards to qualified medical marijuana patients, and to establish procedures under which a patient with the card could use marijuana for medical purposes. NOTE: A recent US Supreme Court decision stated that, in spite of Proposition 215, a person may be prosecuted under federal law for possession of marijuana. The court said medical necessity does not justify possession. So signing up for a marijuana registry card may be signing a confession to violation of federal law.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Health Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee for a hearing on August 29.
LLP Position: Oppose.

SB 446 (John Vasconcellos, D–Santa Clara)
Purpose: To require that a healthcare plan or contract may not exclude from coverage any vaccine for AIDS that is approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Public Employees and Social Security Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 622 (Deborah Ortiz, D–Sacramento)
Purpose: To allow the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) supplemental nutrition branch of the State Department of Health Services to issue grants to local entities to provide certain dental services and information.
Status: Approved by the Senate and sent to the Assembly Human Services Committee for a hearing on June 26. Hearing cancelled at author's request. The bill is probably dead, at least for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issues

AB 25 (Carole Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To allow opposite-gender senior citizen couples to register as domestic partners if one of them is over 62 (currently both must be over 62); allow people to make medical decisions for their partners under certain circumstances; require certain insurers to offer domestic partner coverage in their group health or disability plans; require many employers to allow employees time off to care for a sick domestic partner; require that a domestic partner be given preference when conservatorship is being considered for a person; add domestic partners to the statutory will form; remove the income tax liability for employer-provided domestic partner health insurance; allow people to receive unemployment insurance, under certain circumstances, when they quit a job to follow a domestic partner. The bill reverses the feature of AB 26, passed in 1999, which allows state and local governments to offer health insurance to the domestic partners of their retirees, but which terminates the insurance for the partner if the retiree dies first.
Status: Approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 64 (Elaine Alquist, D–Santa Clara)
Purpose: To provide a state income tax deduction for

Continued on page 7

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Legislative Update

Continued from page 6

the premiums paid by a taxpayer for long-term care insurance on the taxpayer and his or her spouse and dependents. Alquist may add domestic partners to the bill at the request of Lambda Letters.
Status: Died in the Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee.
LLP Position: Support if domestic partners are added alongside spouse.

AB 79 (Sally Havice, D–Cerritos)
Purpose: To require schools to prepare plans for protecting the safety of students against bullying by their classmates (a big problem for queer youth) and plans for conflict resolution.
Status: Approved by the Senate Education Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Put on that committee's suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 194 (John Longville, D–San Bernardino)
Purpose: To clarify the process to be used by California courts when certain postoperative transsexuals request legal recognition of their new sex.
Status: Vetoed by the governor.
LLP Position: Support. Lambda Letters is the bill's sponsor.

AB 1193 (Darrell Steinberg, D–Sacramento)
Purpose: To provide that an insurer issuing policies protecting against certain residential, liability, and commercial risks may not cancel or refuse to renew a policy solely on the basis that one or more claims have been made against the policy, during the previous 60 months for a loss that is the result of a hate crime committed against a church, nonprofit or a related entity. Would require insurance companies to report these claims to the State Insurance Commissioner under certain circumstances. Bill is now supported by the insurance industry.
Status: Approved and sent to the governor for signature.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1278 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To make a number of technical but helpful changes to the laws regarding probate and regarding healthcare decision-makers when the patient is unable to make decisions for him- or herself. Specifically permits a domestic partner to make healthcare decisions for a patient in a facility that employs the domestic partner, as long as the partner is not the supervising healthcare provider for the patient.
Status: Approved and sent to the governor for signature.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1326 (Denis Mountjoy, R–Arcadia)
Purpose: To prohibit the promotion of homosexuality in public education.
Status: Assigned to Assembly Education Committee. Hearing cancelled at request of author. Is a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Oppose.

AB 1338 (Paul Koretz, D–West Hollywood)
Purpose: To establish a legal entity called a civil union, similar to that established in Vermont. Allows two adults to enter a civil union. Does not require that they be of opposite sexes. Declares that the rights and responsibilities of those who enter a civil union shall be the same as for those who get married.
Status: Referred to Assembly Judiciary Committee. Made a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1395 (Roy Ashburn, R–Bakersfield)
Purpose: To provide funding for counseling of adoptive parents and children, including issues that arise during the adoptive child's adolescence.
Status: Failed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Bill is dead for this year.
LLP Position: Watch.

AB 1649 (Jackie Goldberg, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To amend California's Fair Employment and Housing Act to ban employment and housing discrimi-

Continued on page 8

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Legislative Update

Continued from page 7

nation against transgendered people.
Status: Approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Dropped by the author at the request of the governor. The bill may be taken up again next year. If so it will start where it left off this year. Its first committee would be the Senate Appropriations Committee. Goldberg reports that the governor has offered to encourage the development of regulations by the Department of Fair Employment and Housing that would do much of what AB 1649 was intended to do.
LLP Position: Support. Lambda Letters is a sponsor of the bill.

SB 143 (Kevin Murray, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the Attorney General to provide grants to community-based hate violence prevention and response networks.
Status: Failed in the Senate Appropriations Committee. Is a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 144 (Kevin Murray, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the Attorney General to establish, operate, and publicize a toll-free telephone number and a Web site to allow victims and witnesses to report hate crimes.
Status: Failed in Senate Public Safety Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 381 (Wesley Chesbro, D–Arcata)
Purpose: Current law requires city and county Human Relations Commissions to promote mutual understanding and respect of certain groups in society. This bill adds certain groups to the groups listed in current law. The new list includes people of all sexual orientations, but does not include people of all gender identities. We have asked Senator Chesbro to add gender identity to the list. At the request of Lambda Letters, gender has been added to this bill.
Status: Signed by the governor.
LLP Position: Support.

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SB 1049 (Jackie Speier, D–San Mateo)
Purpose: To provide that in San Mateo County, subject to the approval of the board of supervisors, death benefits and survivor's allowances may be payable to a member's surviving domestic partner, as specified.
Status: Signed by the governor.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 1121 (Bob Margett, R–Arcadia)
Purpose: To provide a tax credit of 40 percent, subject to federal income tax laws, for corporations that hire qualified state disability insurance recipients, including individuals with HIV and AIDS. Also to provide extended unemployment compensation disability insurance for an additional 26 times an individual's weekly benefit amount to complete approved job training or occupational rehabilitation, as specified.
Status: Made a two-year bill. It will not be acted upon until next year because the energy crisis is draining the state's financial reserves. Bill will be reconsidered next year once the state's financial picture is clearer.
LLP Position: Support.

People of Color Issues

AB 5 (Thomas Calderon, D–Montebello)
Purpose: To prohibit an insurer from refusing to issue or renew insurance on a private passenger car solely on the basis of a consumer credit report.
Status: Approved by the Assembly and sent to the Senate Insurance Committee. Dropped by the author. Is a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 8 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To allow the state to make grants and loans of up to $55,000 for reconstruction of commercial and industrial buildings in certain downtown areas, when the buildings will provide low-cost rental housing.
Status: Passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 14 (Jackie Goldberg, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To state the intent of the Legislature to examine the state school facilities program to ensure that allocation formulas reflect the current and future needs for public kindergarten to 12th grade and to

Continued on page 9

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Legislative Update

Continued from page 8

examine and assess the needs of the higher educational system, including funding distributions.
Status: Approved by the Assembly and sent to the Senate Education Committee. Held in the Senate Education Committee without recommendation. It may become a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Neutral.

AB 32 (Keith Richman, R–Chatsworth)
Purpose: To create the Cal-Health program, which would provide coordination of the Healthy Families and Medi-Cal programs. The bill would authorize providers to screen and temporarily enroll individuals in Medi-Cal and the Healthy Families Program at the time the person is provided with medical care, and would require full reimbursement of the provider for services covered under those programs. The bill would require licensed hospitals, clinics, and other health facilities to inform individuals about Cal-Health, and in the case of urgent or emergency services, the bill would require that individuals be informed about the program and be given an opportunity to apply after services have been rendered. The bill would expand eligibility under the Medi-Cal program to adults with family incomes at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty level, and would require the state to apply to the federal government for waivers to allow federal funds to be used in that regard.
Status: Approved by the Senate Insurance Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 39 (Helen Thomson, D–Woodland)
Purpose: To allow a tax credit, under certain circumstances, to small employers who pay all or part of the cost of health insurance for their employees.
Status: Referred to Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee. Made a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 42 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To establish a state-funded colorectal cancer screening program to be provided to uninsured or underinsured persons, over the age of 50 and with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
Status: Approved by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 48 (Carl Washington, D–Paramount)
Purpose: To require the state to implement a three-year demonstration project to make grants to eligible alcohol and drug integrated treatment services networks, as defined, in certain counties.
Status: Bill is being amended to specify that funding will come from general funds of the state. Approved Failed passage in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. The bill is dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 51 (Kevin Shelley, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require schools to notify parent or guardians when lead is found in the paint in schools.
Status: Approved by the Senate Environmental Quality Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 59 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To expand eligibility of children in low-income families for health insurance coverage through the Healthy Families Program. Children are eligible if they are receiving food stamps or participating in the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children; Head Start; or the federal school lunch program. The bill requires new procedures to encourage enrollment in the Healthy Families Program.
Status: Approved by the Senate Health and Human Services (H&HS) Committee and the Senate Insurance Committee. Sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 108 (Virginia Strom-Martin, D–Duncan Mills)
Purpose: To require the state to issue a pharmacy license to authorize the operation of a pharmacy located on the land of a recognized Indian tribe without a pharmacist licensed under California's pharmacy law subject to certain conditions, which would include a requirement for any pharmacist employed by the pharmacy to possess a license to practice pharmacy issued by another state or territory of the United States. It is often difficult to find pharmacists willing to work on

Continued on page 10

Legislative Update

Continued from page 9

Indian reservations. Most other states recognize each others' pharmacy licenses. Only Florida and California do not. Allowing pharmacists with licenses from other states to work on Indian reservations increases the pool of candidates and increases the chance of finding someone qualified who is willing to work on the reservation.
Status: Assembly Health Committee Chair refused top let the bill be heard because of opposition from California Board of Pharmacy and the Pharmacy industry. Is dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 114 (Carl Washington, D–Paramount)
Purpose: To provide state funds for grants to residents of cities with populations of over two million to do home repairs to bring their homes into conformance with the city's building codes.
Status: Referred to Assembly Committee on Housing and Community Development. Is a two year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 127 (Marco Firebaugh, D–Los Angeles)

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Purpose: To designate the California Police Activities League, in consultation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, to coordinate, plan, and help implement a statewide youth enrichment sports program to combat juvenile delinquency. Would make grants available to local organizations which establish such programs.
Status: Failed in Assembly Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 144 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To allow the exclusion of the value of a car from being considered when determining whether or not a low-income person qualifies for certain publicly funded social service programs. An additional car would be excluded from consideration when more than one adult lives in the home and at least one adult reports earned income.
Status: Approved by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 198 (Lou Correa, D–Anaheim)
Purpose: To declare legislative intent to create alternatives for Native American tribes in California to finance and develop infrastructure and public works. Many Indian reservations need considerable improvement to schools roads and other infrastructure. Alternatives, beyond gambling casinos, are needed to finance these improvements.
Status: Has been made a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 423 (Robert Hertzberg, D–Van Nuys)
Purpose: Farm labor contractors, and the people they employ to act as farm labor contractors, must be licensed by the California Labor Commissioner. This bill requires the farm labor contractor to be sure that employees acting for them have a valid current license. It also requires farmers to determine that farm labor contractors have the necessary license before entering into a contract with them
Status: Signed by the governor.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 503 (Virginia Strom-Martin, D–Duncan Mills)
Purpose: To establish a grant program for public schools in California to develop, expand, and

Continued on page 11

Legislative Update

Continued from page 10

strengthen dual-language education programs. These programs are taught in both English and a minority language. It allows English language–native children to become proficient in both English and another language. It allows other students to become proficient in both their native language and English.
Status: Held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Is a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 540 (Marco Firebaugh, D–East Los Angeles)
Purpose: To allow all graduates of California high schools, under specified conditions, to pay the California resident tuition rate for attending a California public college or university. Would allow many immigrant students, who now must pay the much higher nonresident tuition, to pay the resident tuition instead.
Status: Approved by the Senate Education Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee for a hearing on August 27.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 548 (George Runner, R–Lancaster)
Purpose: To require the State Department of Health Services to establish a specialty care program for persons who have had problems accessing specialty care.
Status: The author plans to amend the bill in order to get it moving again. The facts about the amendments are not available yet.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 596 (Gloria Negrete McLeod, D–Montclair)
Purpose: To require the Department of Corrections to test all inmates for hepatitis C 60 days prior to being paroled, as specified. This bill would also require inmates who test positive for the virus to complete a hepatitis C education program administered by the Department of Corrections. Would also require the department to see if an inmate, who tests positive for hepatitis, qualifies for veteran's health benefits and to inform the inmate if he or she qualifies.
Status: Referred to Assembly Public Safety Committee. Hearing cancelled at author's request. Bill is dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 675 (Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To provide for improved due process and notification procedures involving the compassionate release of prisoners with HIV/AIDS or other diseases who have twelve months or fewer to live and who are deemed not to be a threat to the public.
Status: Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Sent to the Senate floor for a final vote in that house.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 698 (Herb Wesson, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To create the Office of Immigrant Assistance in the office of the Attorney General to provide education and outreach services, as defined, to the resident immigrant community of the state. Would also require that the information developed for these purposes be printed or broadcast in any language deemed necessary to reach immigrant communities.
Status: Approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 763 (Kevin Shelley, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require that information and materials provided over the Internet explaining services available from a state agency, or notice of availability of materials made in electronic form consistent with use over the Internet, shall be translated into any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of people served by the agency, and also distributed through any applicable Web sites under those circumstances.
Status: Is being dropped by the author. The provisions of this bill are being added to AB 805.
LLP Position: Support.

Continued on page 12

Legislative Update

Continued from page 11

AB 788 (Marco Firebaugh, D–East Los Angeles)
Purpose: To broaden the definition of racial profiling by state or local police. Provides for money damages from law-enforcement personnel and public agencies to victims of racial profiling. Requires state and local police forces to report traffic stops and to include data about the stops relating to possible racial profiling. Specifies that such reports not include information by which the person stopped could be identified. Would also make police officers and their agencies liable for violation of racial profiling laws.
Status: Did not make it out of the Assembly. The bill is dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 800 (Herb Wesson, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To prohibit employers from requiring any particular language to be spoken in the workplace unless there is a business need for it.
Status: Sent by the committee chair to the floor of the Senate.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 805 (Kevin Shelley, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require each state agency that maintains a Web site to provide links on the home page of its Web site to appropriate non-English information, including information at least in Spanish and Chinese, consistent with the requirements of the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act.
Status: Failed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 989 (Wilma Chan, D–Oakland)
Purpose: Existing law requires the State Department of Social Services to establish programs to provide food assistance and cash assistance for noncitizens who, due to their immigration status, are not eligible for federal food stamps and for SSI/SSP benefits, and specifies that an applicant who is otherwise eligible for the program but entered the United States after August 22, 1996, and who is not otherwise exempt, shall be eligible for assistance for the period beginning on October 1, 1999, and ending September 30, 2001. This bill would eliminate the termination date of that period of eligibility. People in need could continue getting assistance.
Status: Approved by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1159 (Robert Pacheco, R–City of Industry)
Purpose: Recently Governor Davis line-item vetoed $126 million from the state budget bill that was meant for the state's community colleges. That was more than one quarter of all the line-item vetoes he made. Pacheco rewrote this bill to restore $98 million of those cuts to those colleges. The bill is a budget bill and is to go into effect immediately if signed by the governor. For those two reasons, it requires two-thirds approval by each house of the legislature rather than a simple majority.
Status: Awaiting approval by the Senate. If passed there, it must return to the Assembly for concurrence with the changes made in the Senate.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1321 (Dion Aroner, D–Berkeley)
Purpose: To create the Health Utilities Board which would be charged with providing comprehensive, quality health care to all Californians and controlling health care costs through rate setting, eliminating waste and inefficiency, and achieving public accountability for meeting standards of high quality care.
Status: Referred to Assembly Health Committee. Made a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 1423 (Helen Thomson, D–Davis)
Purpose: To include licensed marriage and family therapist, and clinical social worker, services within the scope of Medi-Cal covered benefits to the extent that federal matching funds are available, including home- and community-based services approved by the Department of Health and Human Services for beneficiaries with a diagnosis of AIDS (or ARC) who require intermediate care or a higher-level of care.
Status: Approved by the Assembly and sent to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. No hearing date set yet. Probably dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

Continued on page 13

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Legislative Update

Continued from page 12

ABX1 3 (Roderick Wright, D–South Central Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the California Public Utilities Commission to take steps to increase participation in the CARE Program, an electric and gas payment assistance program for low-income people.
Status: Signed by Governor.
LLP Position: Support.

ACR 17 (George Nakano, D–Torrance)
Purpose: To declare February 19, 2001, as a Day of Remembrance in order to increase public awareness of the events surrounding the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II.
Status: Signed by Governor Davis.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 21 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To require school districts to inspect all schools constructed prior to 1992 for lead hazards and to devise an appropriate abatement plan, where necessary; require the Department of Health Services to provide technical assistance; require the school district to carry out the abatement of lead hazards; and require school districts, subject to funding being made available, to provide training to maintenance workers to enable them to properly identify and abate lead hazards.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 30 (Wesley Chesbro, D–Arcata)
Purpose: To require the State Department of Mental Health, the Department of Finance, and the Office of the Legislative Analyst to form a workgroup to study various options to restructure mental health services and funding in California, and would require the workgroup to make recommendations to the Legislature and Governor Davis on or before January 31, 2002. People of color certainly have no more mental health problems than anyone else. However, they are among the most uninsured in the state and whatever insurance is available often has little or no mental health coverage.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Appropriations Committee and sent to the floor of the Assembly.
LLP Position: Support

SB 41 (Deirdre Alpert, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To require the State Librarian to allocate grants to develop Native American instructional materials for public schools.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Education Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 59 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To authorize demonstration projects to allow healthcare coverage for immigrants, homeless individuals, people living with HIV/AIDS, and other populations currently facing health disparities. The bill would authorize grants to healthcare providers and community-based clinics to organize into formalized networks that provide healthcare services to migrant populations as they move through the state during the year. The bill would authorize grants to establish demonstration projects that would assist healthcare providers in developing enabling programs making the targeted groups aware of the healthcare programs available to them.
Status: Died in the Senate Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support

SB 98 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Santa Monica)
Purpose: To permit certain cities and counties to contract with the State Department of Mental Health and the State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, jointly, to provide specified services under the Medi-Cal program to low-income persons with a dual diagnosis of alcohol or drug addiction and serious, persistent mental illness.

Continued on page 14

Discrimination Complaints

Have you experienced employment discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation or because of your age (40 and over), ancestry, color, creed, disability, marital status, medical condition, national origin, race, religion, or sex? Have you been denied family and medical care leave or pregnancy disability leave?
If so, you may register a complaint with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing. In cases of employment discrimination, call the department at (800) 884-1684. In cases of housing discrimination, call (800) 233-3212.
The person answering the phone will schedule an appointment for you at the Department of Fair Employment and Housing Office which is closest to your home or place of employment.

Continued from page 13

Status: Died in the Senate Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 410 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Santa Monica)
Purpose: To prohibit employers from requiring employees to agree to arbitrate any claim arising under the California Fair Employment and Housing Act. Would prohibit employers from firing, harassing, expelling, or otherwise discriminating against an employee for refusing to agree to such arbitration.
Status: Referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee for a hearing on April 17. Hearing cancelled by author. Is a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 987 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To require proper implementation of the previously passed Dymally-Alatorre Act. That act required state and local agencies to offer their services in languages other than English when there is a significant need. Surveys have found that many agencies are not complying with the earlier act.
Status: Approved by the Senate and sent to the Assembly Business and Professions Committee for a hearing on July 6. Hearing cancelled at request of author.
LLP Position: Support.

Women's Issues

AB 4 (Patricia Bates, R–Laguna Nigel)
Purpose: The bill has been revised. Existing law requires any person convicted of specified sex offenses to register, for the rest of his or her life while residing or located within California, with the chief of police or the sheriff, as specified, and with the chief of police of a campus of the University of California, the California State University, or community college if the person is residing or located upon the campus or in any of its facilities, within five working days of coming into, or changing his or her residence or location within, any city, county, or city and county, or campus. This bill would apply these provisions to persons carrying on a vocation, as defined, and would add a provision that would require transient persons carrying on a vocation, and employees at university and college campuses, to register and appear personally to notify the campus police department within five working days of changing his or her location or of ceasing to be enrolled or employed at the college or university.
Status: Passed by the Senate Public Safety Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 6 (Tony Cardenas, D–Mission Hills)
Purpose: To permit schools to establish before- and after-school enrichment programs for children, and to establish maximum grants for these programs.
Status: Approved by the Senate Education Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 43 (Herb Wesson, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require the Commission on the Status of Women to evaluate the compensation and classification plans for state civil service and related employees and the employees of the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, and the California State University and to determine where compensation and classification inequities exist, based on comparability of the value of work. It would require the commission to report to the Legislature and the parties meeting and conferring under the Ralph C. Dills Act.
Status: Approved by the Senate Public Employees Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 130 (Tony Cardenas, D–Sylmar)
Purpose: To expand and reorganize a state-funded family planning program to make it a comprehensive preventive and health screening program for low-income women under 65. Would provide funding for family planning services, but specifically excludes funding for abortion-related services or advice. Current law already prohibits spending for abortions and this law leaves that provision unchanged.
Status: Approved by the Assembly and sent to the Senate. Author decided to drop the bill for this year.
LLP Position: Support with reservations about the abortion issue.

AB 160 (Patricia Bates, R–Laguna Niguel)
Purpose: This bill has been revised. The bill would direct the Judicial Council of California to promulgate a

Continued on page 15

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Continued from page 14

protocol, for adoption by local courts, to provide for coordination of all orders regarding the same persons. This bill would require that the protocol include mechanisms for communication and information sharing, as specified, and permit family or juvenile court orders to coexist with criminal court orders as long as the orders protect the safety of the parties, as specified. This bill would also require a court that modifies, extends, or terminates an order protecting a victim of violent crime from contact with the defendant to transmit that modification, extension, or termination to the law enforcement agency that entered the protective order into the Domestic Violence Restraining Order System.
Status: Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee and sent to the floor of the Senate.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 180 (Gil Cedillo, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To exempt from state sales tax items sold by a thrift store in support of an agency that provides hospice care to people with HIV/AIDS. This bill eliminates the ending date for the tax exemption which is in the current law. The bill previously provided a tax exemption to thrift stores that support programs for those with cancer. Cancer was dropped from the bill because there was too much opposition to it.
Status: Approved by the Senate Revenue and Tax Committee and sent to the Senate Appropriations Committee.
LLP Position: Support.

AB 731 (Howard Wayne, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To clarify and strengthen the rules for enforcing restraining orders that were issued by courts outside of California.
Status: Passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee and sent to the floor of the Senate.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 37 (Jackie Speier, D–San Mateo)
Purpose: To require healthcare service plans and certain disability insurers to provide coverage for all healthcare services related to the treatment of an enrollee or insured in clinical trials for new cancer medications. The study participant must have been diagnosed with cancer.
Status: Signed by the governor.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 66 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Santa Monica)
Purpose: To require the court, when considering issuance of a protective order, to search specified records and databases to determine if the proposed subject of the order has any specified prior criminal convictions or outstanding warrants, is on parole or probation, or is or was the subject of other protective or restraining orders. Would require the prosecuting attorney, in all prosecutions of certain crimes when a conviction is obtained, to cause a search to be made of specified databases, for review by the court, to determine if the defendant is the subject of any protective or restraining orders and to notify other courts of the pending prosecution.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Judiciary Committee and sent to the Assembly Appropriations Committee suspense file.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 217 (Sheila Kuehl, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require counties to include the development of services to domestic violence victims in the county CalWORKS plan, and to specify services to assist victims of domestic violence to become self-sufficient. CalWORKS is a program designed to help welfare recipients return to work.
Status: Failed in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The bill is dead.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 224 (Jackie Speier, D–San Mateo)
Purpose: To require the department of Health Services to submit a state plan amendment to the federal Health Care Financing Administration adopting the optional categorically needy eligibility group described in the federal Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention and Treatment Act of 2000, thereby providing breast and cervical cancer treatment under the Medi-Cal program, subject to federal financial participation. The optional categorically needy described in the federal bill are low income people being given cancer treatment, paid for by the state, but whose circumstances do not allow the state to request matching federal funds to help cover the cost of the treatment.
Status: Dropped by the author for this year. She thinks much of this bill's purpose was accomplished through other budget trailer bills. She might take the bill up

Continued on page 16

Legislative Update

Continued from page 15

again next year to accomplish any remaining goals of the bill.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 927 (Martha Escutia, D–Norwalk)
Purpose: To require the appointment in domestic violence proceedings, and in other settings mandated by the court, of an interpreter for a person who is deaf or hearing-impaired as well as the appointment of a foreign language interpreter for a person not proficient in English; to require certified sign language interpreters in these proceedings; and to limit the services of foreign language interpreters to certified interpreters. The bill would provide for the waiver of fees for an interpreter for a petitioner who is not proficient in English in domestic violence proceedings, as well as for any person who appears *in forma pauperis* (with court fees waived), or for any other party pursuant to a court order. This bill would also require the Judicial Council to establish additional domestic violence training requirements for interpreters, as specified, and to conduct a public education and notification program
Status: Failed in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The bill is dead for this year.
LLP Position: Support.

SB 993 (Liz Figueroa, D–Fremont)
Purpose: To increase the amount of money paid by the state to child care centers for the cost of caring for low income children.
Status: Approved by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and referred to the Senate Committee on Education. Has been made a two-year bill.
LLP Position: Support.

SJR 3 (Betty Karnette, D–Long Beach)
Purpose: To send a resolution to the federal executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government stating that every effort should be made at the state and federal level to protect Roe v. Wade.
Status: Approved by the Assembly Judiciary Committee and sent to the floor of the Assembly. If it is approved by both houses, the resolution will go directly to the federal government. Governor Davis does not need to sign the bill first.
LLP Position: Support.
###

Census Confirms Existence of Domestic Partnerships

by Boyce Hinman, Chief Lobbyist

The LGBT community has struggled for years to gain legal recognition of our families. The drive to obtain the right to marry, or at least to get legal recognition as domestic partners, has been at the center of that struggle. Two essential questions in that drive have, until now, been unanswered. Do lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and/or transgendered people in same-sex partnerships really have families? Are there enough such families to merit writing laws to support and protect them?

Recently the US Census Bureau issued a report that answers those questions with a resounding *yes*. In the 2000 census, the Census Bureau asked people if they were in same-sex partnerships. The answer: 92,138 same-sex couples live in California. The Census Bureau found large numbers of same-sex couples in other states as well. New York had 46,490 same-sex couples, Florida had 41,048, and Illinois had 22,887. (Not all the results for other states have been published yet.) Many people, of course, are afraid to admit being in such relationships, so these figures are probably underestimates.

It is interesting to note that although California has more than 92,000 same-sex couples, only 7,224 couples have registered as domestic partners with the Secretary of State's office. This, too, may result from the fear factor. Probably another reason is that most people don't get much benefit from registering their partnerships. Our community's lobbyists should be able to use this census data to persuade elected officials to grant greater recognition and protection of our families.
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Improve the World—Opportunity Available!

by Adrienne Lauby

Have you ever fired off a letter to a legislator about an issue you felt passionate about? Have you ever wondered what good your one little letter would do? Would you like your effort to be multiplied by the signatures of many hundreds of others?

I'm a volunteer for the Lambda Letters Project and I've experienced the heady feeling resulting from helping many hundreds of people write to their legislators about the issues I care about. I research and write about women's issues. Each month I write a letter to legislators on an issue of great importance to me as a woman. Lambda Letters sends my letter to its thousands of members and invites them to sign the letter and send it to their legislators.

Each month Lambda Letters volunteers mail my letter out, along with three other letters about issues meaningful to people living with HIV/AIDS; people of color; and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) people. Our members all across California sign these letters. Each letter is printed with that individual's name and address and is addressed to the legislator from their district. Lambda Letters also has an active e-mail group that follows bills through the legislative process. Often the letters that I, and other volunteers, create each month are sent to the people in the e-mail group. Again, that multiplies the effect of my letter.

Here's where you come in.

I would like a partner to help me work on women's issues. Lambda Letters is also looking for someone to do the People of Color and LGBT letters. It's satisfying work that only takes a few hours each month. I've sent letters to support women in prison. I've written letters about domestic violence, reproductive rights, welfare, health care, breast cancer, cervical cancer, childcare, and other issues. You could help people write to their legislators on the issues you are passionate about.

Lambda Letters is conducting some training in October for people who do what I do. I will be there. I invite you to attend that training and to consider becoming a letter writer for the Lambda Letters Project. If you would like to volunteer, or even if you would just like to sit in on the training, please contact Lambda Letters at (916) 728-1261 for more information. ###

People of Color Issue

Continued from page 4

undocumented immigrants in Texas to attend public colleges and universities in that state at the normal tuition rate for Texas residents. Furthermore, Congress is considering legislation—HR 1918, "The Student Adjustment Act of 2001," introduced in the House of Representatives by Chris Cannon (R–Utah)—that would allow states to set their own residency rules without being required to subsidize out-of-state students. Similar legislation will soon be introduced in the US Senate. Both these bills are sponsored by Democrats and Republicans.

Americans have long taken for granted their right to an education at the colleges and universities that are funded by their tax dollars. These institutions typically charge much less to residents of the state than do private colleges and universities.

AB 540 says that any student, even undocumented students, should qualify for the resident level of tuition in California's public colleges and universities as long as they:

- Attended high school for three years in California
- Graduated from high school or earned a high school equivalency diploma

We think that AB 540 makes absolute sense. It allows talented students to make the most of their skills by getting an affordable education. That allows them to put those talents to work and benefit society. Beyond that, it increases their potential earning power. Thus, they contribute more to the economy and add to the tax base needed to support the many important programs of state and federal government.

We urge you to write to Governor Davis and tell him to sign AB 540.

(Information about HR 1918 and the Texas legislation was provided by the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund.) ###

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LGBT Issue

Continued from page 3

health or disability plans. This would make it easier for employers to provide health care insurance for their employees' domestic partners. AB 25 would require many employers to allow employees time off to care for a sick domestic partner.

The bill would require that a domestic partner be given preference when conservatorship is being considered for a person. This is important when one of the partners is disabled and unable to manage his or her own affairs. It would reduce the chance that the parents of the disabled partner could come in and push the healthy partner aside when important health care and other decisions are being made for the patient. This is what happened in the infamous Sharon Kowalski case. (Upon discovering that she had been involved for 10 years with a woman named Karen Thompson, Sharon's father took control of his daughter's medical care after she was in a serious accident. Only after many years did Karen gain the legal right to control Sharon's care and bring her home.)

This bill would add domestic partners to the statutory will form. This means that if a person in a domestic partnership dies without a will, his or her surviving partner would be at the head of the list of those who could receive the property of the deceased person.

Currently an employee must pay income tax on the value of any employer-provided health insurance for the employee's domestic partner. AB 25 would eliminate the state tax on that benefit.

If a married person moves to another city to take a new job, that person's spouse may qualify for unemployment insurance if he or she quits a job to follow the spouse. Under current law, domestic partners do not qualify for this benefit. AB 25 would correct this situation.

Please write to Governor Davis urging him to sign AB 25.

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Don't Know Who Represents You?

Send your request with a stamped, self-addressed envelope and we'll send you a complete list of your elected officials. Or go to www.lambdaletters.org to find out who represents you.

Women's Issue

Continued from page 4

Both bills will save taxpayer money. SB 396 encourages prisoners to get medical care sooner and protects the state from expensive wrongful death suits. AB 675 eliminates some of the $100,000 in average medical costs for the last year of a prisoner's life.

Relatively uncontroversial and well supported, both bills are likely to pass through the legislature. One question remains: What will happen when they land on the governor's desk?

The circumstances of Charisse Shumate's death remind us that elected politicians are afraid. As he anticipates another media-centered election, Governor Davis knows that prison reforms make unpopular headlines.

Your letters will tell Governor Davis that many voters do not see prisoners as less than human. We understand that in different life circumstances, assaulted by a battering partner, we might be in prison today. May we live our freedom as steadfastly as Charisse Shumate lived her imprisonment.

For more information about the incident, go to *www.sfbg.com/News/35/46/46ogobit.html.*

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Making Even More of a Difference

Continued from page 1

If you're reading this already, you may very well qualify as a board member. We're looking for people who are good team players. Self-confidence is also important because board members may speak to individuals or groups about our history and activities, about joining the Project, or about making a contribution to Lambda Letters. We need people who are at least willing to learn how to do these things. However, people with skills in fundraising or grant writing are prized as well. Computer skills and Internet access are a plus.

The board meets four times each year in Sacramento. Meetings are always on a Saturday and we pay transportation costs for board members to attend the meetings. Recently the board has been conducting monthly telephone conferences. These calls are part of a fundraising training program. Please get in touch with us at (916) 728-1261 and consider a position on Lambda Letters' board of directors.

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(Re-)Introduction to LLP

Continued from page 1

Project was launched as a committee of the River City Democratic Club in the fall of 1988. The following April Lambda Letters became an independent, nonpartisan lobbying organization. We officially incorporated in 1993 as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit.

From the very beginning our primary purpose has been to help people write letters, make phone calls, and send e-mail messages to their legislators on civil rights and health issues. At first we worked on lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues, HIV/AIDS issues, and women's issues. In 1993 we added issues of concern to people of color. In 1996 we added the "T" to LGB issues when we began lobbying for the addition of transgendered people to California's Hate Crimes Statistics Act.

Former State Senator Diane Watson (now a member of the House of Representatives) agreed to introduce the bill but changed her mind when welfare reform became a big issue. Many of the people in her district were on welfare, so she felt she needed to concentrate on that issue. Senator Sheila Kuehl (an Assemblymember at the time) later introduced the bill we had been seeking and it was passed and signed by the governor. In 1998 Lambda Letters began a process that eventually led to the introduction of two state bills to ban discrimination against transgendered people, which have not yet been passed.

In its first year of operation, Lambda Letters had a handful of members, all of which lived in Sacramento. They sent a little over 900 letters. Now Lambda Letters has members in 44 of 58 counties and we deliver well over 100,000 letters and e-mail messages to legislators each year.

Each month Lambda Letters publishes a monthly newsletter, which contains an article on a piece of legislation in each of our four subject areas: HIV/AIDS, LGBT, people of color, and women's issues. The articles contain information that people can use to compose letters to their legislators. We also enclose personalized sample letters that are addressed to members' legislators. People may just sign and return those letters or compose their own if they wish.

The newsletter also contains articles of general interest to the community. Each issue contains a listing of more than 70 bills that Lambda Letters is tracking. The list explains the purpose of each bill, tells where the bill is in the legislative process, and indicates our position on the bill.

Lambda Letters also maintains a useful and informative Web site at *www.lambdaletters.org*. We list each bill we track on the Web site and update that list twice a month. Visitors can also find out which legislators represent them or learn where to go to submit a discrimination complaint. The Web site also features editorials and articles of current interest to the community.

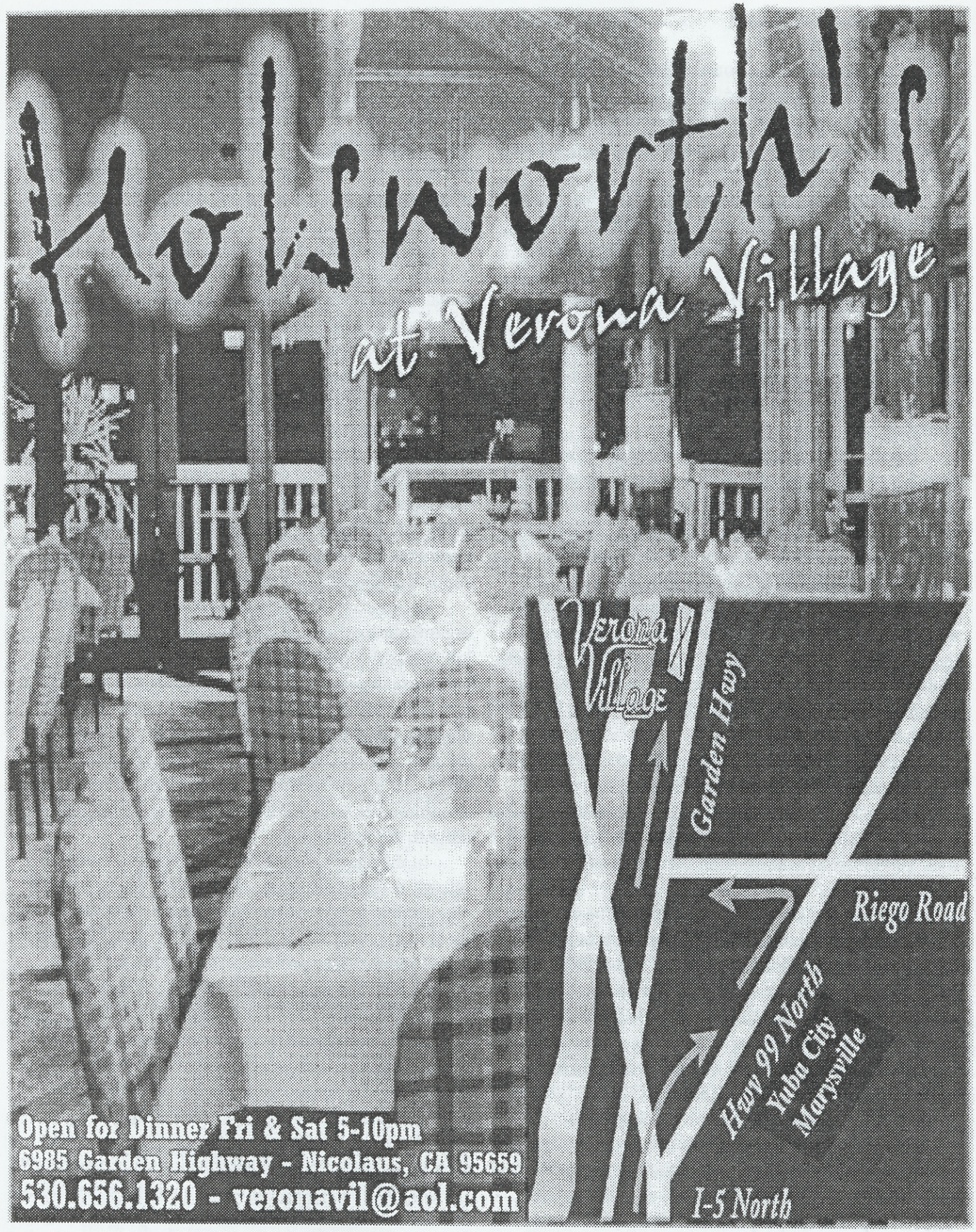
For most of its existence, Lambda Letters has been run entirely by volunteers. We now have a paid private contractor who handles our mailing operations. However, all other work of the Project is still accomplished by volunteers. That helps us keep our expenses to an absolute minimum.

Until recently, LLP has done relatively little direct lobbying. It is absolutely essential to the community, but we feel that letters from the voters are just as important. Letters provide indispensable support for the messages we bring to legislators by our community's lobbyists. Thus Lambda Letters and direct lobbying organizations can provide a potent one–two punch in support of the issues we care about.

In our early years we worked closely with an organization called LIFE Lobby. They employed lobbyists who visited legislators and we provided backup on the messages they delivered to those legislators. We were dismayed when LIFE Lobby closed its doors in the summer of 1998. However, we were delighted when CAPE (the California Alliance for Pride and Equality) was formed later in 1998. We were eager to collaborate with them on the issues of great importance to the community.

In the past few years we have begun to venture into more direct lobbying. We did this because no one else seemed to be pushing for certain legislation that we feel is important. We initiated the drive to add transgendered people to the protection of California's Hate Crimes Act. We were the driving force behind the introduction of AB 2142 and AB 1649, which prohibit discrimination against transgendered people. We also spent a year and a half negotiating with Assemblymember Carole Migden's office to increase the benefits available to domestic partners in California.

We are always happy to hear from people who would like to join our board or volunteer in other ways. If you would like to contribute financially, please send a check made out to Lambda Letters Project and return it in the envelope that came with this newsletter. Thanks for listening. ###



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